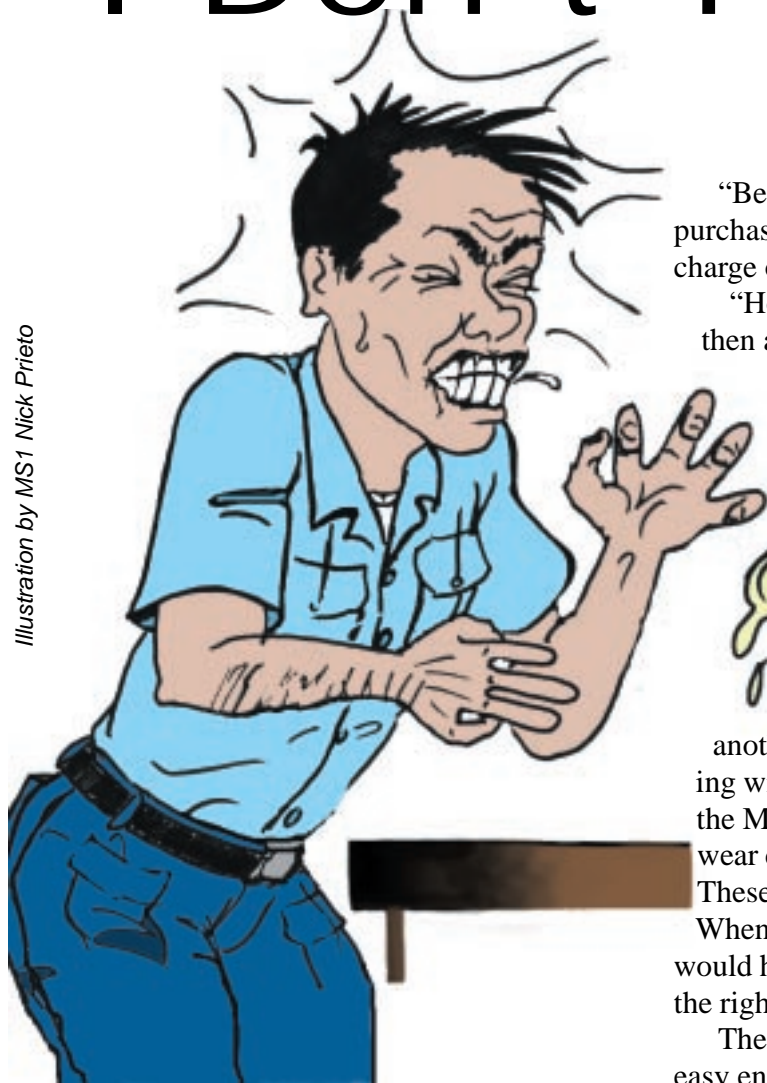


"Just Dew It?" I Don't Think So

Illustration by MS1 Nick Prieto



"Because the ship doesn't have money to purchase transfer containers," replied the Sailor in charge of the space.

"How do you know what is in the cans?" I then asked.

"Pepsi or Coke cans are for haze gray, Mountain Dew cans are for white, and all other cans are for various colors of paint," he answered.

I pointed out they were asking for trouble by ignoring precautions and requirements¹ for handling hazardous material.

I had to repeat this warning while doing a walk-through of spaces aboard another ship, where I found two Sailors working with Spray Nine, a cleaning solution. I knew the MSDS for this liquid recommends that users wear chemical goggles and impervious gloves. These Sailors, however, weren't wearing any.

When I asked why, they responded, "Because we would have to walk to the tool-issue room to get the right PPE."

The instructions for using Spray Nine sound easy enough, but these Sailors hadn't taken time to read them. They didn't know where to go for the MSDS, and they were in a hurry to finish the job so they could make liberty call. Their supervisor took time to explain the MSDS to them before letting them go on liberty—20 minutes later. Having to go to a hospital for hazmat exposure would have taken a lot longer than that.

After these surveys, I read some mishap reports and learned that my findings were only part of the problem with hazmat. There were accounts of Sailors splashing hazmat in their eyes, mistakenly drinking it, developing skin irritations, or becoming disoriented after exposure to hazmat.

By Lt. Don Elswick, USNR-R

Before you grab an open can of Mountain Dew and start gulping, check the contents. Otherwise, you might have to make an unexpected visit to sick bay.

While surveying a shipboard space, I noticed a can of this popular soft drink with the top missing. It contained white paint. I asked my escort why, and he said the guys in the paint locker used soda cans for issuing paint. A trip to the paint locker revealed all kinds of aluminum cans segregated in trash bags. "Why do you use these cans?" I asked.